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I Kings vii. 46.

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THE columns which stood before the temple, together with the other bronze ornaments and utensils, were cast in the Jordan valley, **בְּמַעְבָּה הָאֲדָמָה בֵּין סְכוֹת וּבֵין צָרְתָן**. The parallel passage, 2 Chron. iv. 17, has **בְּעֵבִי הָאֲדָמָה**. The latter word (עֵבִי) means 'thickness,'¹ and **מַעְבָּה** in Kings is generally regarded as equivalent to it. So, quite literally, LXX., ἐν τῇ πάχλει τῆς γῆς, Targ., **בְּעוֹבֵי גִרְנִישָׁתָא**. Jerome renders more specifically, *in argillosa terra*, and this interpretation is followed by most subsequent commentators.² Klostermann alone, so far as I know, finds this explanation unsatisfactory.³ He rightly observes that in the context we require the name of a definite locality, not a description of the kind of earth of which Hiram made his moulds, and proposes accordingly to emend, **הָאֲדָמָה בְּמַעְרָה**, 'in the red cave,'—a conjecture which is hardly likely to find acceptance. There are other objections to the common interpretation. Apart from the fact that a bronze founder would hardly choose clay for his moulds, a writer who meant *clay ground* had no occasion to use such a singular expression. The translation of LXX. and Targ. is better. For the columns, at least, which we may suppose to have been cast by a process similar to our loam-moulding, it would be necessary to select a spot where there was considerable depth of earth, where the rock did not, as among the hills of Judah, lie close to the surface. The deep alluvium of the Jordan valley meets this requirement. But would 'depth of earth' be expressed in Hebrew by **עֵבִי** or **מַעְבָּה**? At any rate, Klostermann's objection holds against this interpretation also, unless we should render, "In the Jordan valley, . . . in the place where the earth is deepest, between Succoth and Şarethan."

¹ I K. vii. 26 (**עֵבִי**); the verb **עָבָה**, 'be thick,' xii. 10; also NH. and Syr. (**עֵבִי**).

² AV., RV.; Cler., Ges., Then., *al*.

³ Siegfried-Stade set an interrogation point after the word.

From Joshua iii. 16 we learn that there was in the vicinity of Šarethan a town, Adam,⁴ the name of which is in all probability preserved in the modern ed-Dāmīeh, at a point where the main road from Central Palestine to Gilead has probably always crossed the river. The conjecture is not remote, that in **מעבה האדמה**, 1 K. vii. 46, we should recognize the name of this locality. For **במעבה** we should then emend, **במעבר** or **במעברת**, “at the crossing of Adam,”⁵ between Succoth and Šarethan.”

The vicinity of ed-Dāmīeh would be a very suitable place for the work. Next to the necessity of finding a proper loam for the moulds, it would be essential to have a practicable road for the transportation of the heavy castings. We may assume, also, that the nearest point to Jerusalem in which these conditions were fulfilled would be selected. The plain of Jericho is excluded, because the steep and crooked way which leads up thence to Jerusalem would be wholly impracticable for moving the great columns. On the other hand, from the vicinity of ed-Dāmīeh the Wady Fār’ah affords the easiest ascent from the Jordan valley to the height of the central range, along which a comparatively level road leads to Jerusalem.⁶

If this conjecture be correct, it has an important bearing on the disputed question of the site of Succoth. Chiefly on the ground of 1 K. vii. 46, combined with iv. 12, Robinson placed Succoth at Sākūt, about nine miles south of Beisān;⁷ while others, with Ritter, have supposed that there were two Succoths, one east of the Jordan, the other west of it. In 1 K. iv. 12 we read that one of the districts into which Solomon divided his kingdom included “Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth-shean which is beside Šarethan below Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, to opposite Jokmeam.”⁸ This prefecture, therefore, included not only cities in the Great Plain, but the valley of Jezreel, Beth-shean, and places in the valley of the Jordan. The text of the verse is, however, in disorder. **כל בית** **שאן אשר אצל צרתנה מתחת לירעאל** is quite impossible; no

⁴ The waters of the Jordan backed up as far as **אדם העיר אשר מצד צרתן**.

⁵ The pronunciation of the proper noun is of course uncertain.

⁶ The vicinity of Bethshean, where Šarethan is frequently supposed to have lain, is so far from Jerusalem that it would not be chosen, if a suitable place could be found nearer.

⁷ *Bibl. Researches*², iii, 309–312. The modern name is very variously written; see Kampffmeyer, *ZDPV*. xvi. 1892, p. 52.

⁸ **תענך ומגדו וכל בית שאן אשר אצל צרתנה מתחת לירעאל מבית שאן עד אבל מחילה עד מעבר ליקמם**

Old Testament writer can have described the position of Beth-shean in such a fashion. Either the words, **אשר אצל צרתנה**, are misplaced;⁹ or the preceding **וכל בית שאן** is corrupt;¹⁰ or both. It is peculiarly hazardous, therefore, to infer from this verse that Şarethan was very near Beth-shean, and that therefore Succoth, which is named with Şarethan in 1 K. vii. 46, must be sought in the same neighborhood.

Against this is to be put not only Jos. iii. 16, but Jud. vii. 22, viii. 5. The Midianites fled through the valley "to Beth-shittah, to Şererah, to the brink of (?) Abel-meholah, near Tabbath."¹¹ The verse is composite or heavily glossed, as the shifting construction shows. For **צררה**, most recent critics read **צִרְדָּה** (1 K. xi. 26); the latter is identified with **צִרְתָּן** (2 Chron. iv. 17 cf. with 1 K. vii. 46). Here again it is named with Abel-meholah, as in 1 K. iv. 12. From this point Gideon crossed the Jordan to Succoth (Jud. viii. 5). Putting these things together, there is independent reason to believe that the Succoth of 1 K. vii. 46 was east of the Jordan on or near the Jabbok (Zerḡā); while Şarethan was west of the river, in the valley opposite Succoth. Between them was a ford by which the main road crossed the Jordan; and on the river, beside Şarethan, was a town **אדם**. Here, if my conjecture is sound, "at the crossing of Adam," the bronzes for the temple were cast.¹²

⁹ Originally, perhaps, belonging to Abel-meholah? Cf. Jud. vii. 22.

¹⁰ The words are sufficiently suspicious; note also **מִבֵּית שָׁאן** immediately below.

¹¹ **עַד בֵּית הַשָּׂטָה צִרְתָּה עַד שֹׁפַת אָבֶל מְחֹלָה עַל טַבַּת**

¹² I see that a somewhat similar conjecture has been made before; viz., that in 1 K. vii. 46; 2 Chron. iv. 17, we should read *at the city of Adam* (**בְּעִיר אָדָם**); see Van de Velde, *Syria and Palestine*, ii. p. 323. By whom this suggestion was made, I have not found out. There is no mention of it apparently in recent commentaries or works on geography.